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Shultz Cites Progress In Moscow Meetings

Mid-Range Missile Pact 'Close at Hand'

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P MOSCOW, April 15—Secretary of State George P. Shultz said today that three days of talks with Soviet leaders produced "quite a lot of progress" toward a treaty that would eliminate medium-range missiles in Europe and that he can see the prospect "close at hand" for reaching an agreement.

Shultz's assessment, one of the most optimistic that has been heard from a senior U.S. negotiator, was based on a new offer presented to him yesterday by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and refined somewhat today by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze.

The new offer essentially combines elimination of the medium, or intermediate-range, nuclear-armed missiles of both sides that can hit targets between 600 and 3,000 miles away, with elimination of missiles having ranges of 350 to 600 miles, a category in which the Soviets have a monopoly.

Shultz told Gorbachev—as he told a press conference shortly before leaving Moscow—that he could not respond immediately to the offer because of the necessity to consult U.S. allies in Europe. Late today, Shultz flew to Brussels to begin the process of discussion within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is likely to take several weeks.

Shevardnadze, in a brief exchange with reporters, said it is "quite realistic" to expect Gorbachev to go to a meeting in the United States with President Reagan later this year to sign a pact on European-based missiles. It would be the first U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms treaty of the Reagan administration.

Agreement on such a treaty has been considered for many months to be the key to the next full-scale

Reagan-Gorbachev summit. The Soviets have also said that Shultz's willingness to bargain on such a treaty during his trip here would be crucial to the prospects for arms control negotiations in the remaining months of the Reagan administration.

Through the official news agency Tass and state television, the Soviets gave generally upbeat assessments of Shultz's talks. Tass accused the U.S. delegation of failing to give a "constructive response" to Soviet proposals, but it said that overall the discussions had been "timely and useful." Talks would continue at future ministerial meetings, as well as at Geneva, it said.

Tass said that "agreement in principle was reached to step up work to realize the Reykjavik understanding on medium-range missiles," and it noted that the Soviets had made a "concrete proposal" on key provisions under discussion in Geneva on strategic weapons. This, it said, could lay the basis—along with an accord on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF)—for a summit meeting.

Gorbachev, meeting today with U.S. House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.) and other members of a congressional delegation, said the United States and Soviet Union "are close to reaching an agreement on the problem of medium-range missiles in linkage with shorter-range missiles," Tass said.

Late tonight, Soviet television showed a 32-minute interview with Shultz by a Soviet commentator, in which Shultz defended the U.S. arms control position and gave a blunt assessment of the Soviet "invasion" of Afghanistan and what he called its aggressive espionage tactics. The unedited interview was the first ever shown on Soviet television with a U.S. secretary of state, according to diplomats here.

As it turned out, the potential for bargaining during Shultz's mission to Moscow was cut short by Gorbachev's proposal to eliminate all Soviet shorter-range nuclear missiles—those with a range of 500 to 1,000 kilometers (300 to 600 miles)—"within a relatively short and clearly defined time frame." Shevardnadze today specified that the weapons would be eliminated within one year after the ratification of an INF pact, according to Shultz. The intermediate-range accord would deal with hundreds of Soviet triple-warhead SS20 missiles and U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles.

By insisting on time to consult the allies, Shultz seems to have incurred the criticism of Soviet officials demanding an immediate answer. But from the viewpoint of U.S. officials in Shultz's party, this stand helps to reassure NATO allies who were upset by being overlooked in the Reagan-Gorbachev dealings at Reykjavik, and to deal with the concern of some NATO allies about what they say is the "denuclearizing" of Europe.

Some members of the Shultz party said they expect difficult discussions with the Europeans. But a high-ranking U.S. arms control expert told reporters that, despite all the problems remaining, "we are very close to a deal" on INF.

A key selling point for the arrangement that is shaping up is that it is asymmetrical. The Soviet Union, as its offer is now understood, undertakes to eliminate all shorter-range INF missiles worldwide. The United States, which has no weapons in this category, would be required to make no corresponding reductions.

Officials said the Soviets have a total of about 130 SS12/22 launchers and about 12 SS23 launchers, each with some extra missiles for refires. About one-third of these are deployed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, from which the Soviets proposed to remove and destroy them on the signing of an INF treaty. Under Gorbachev's new proposal, as understood by U.S. officials, the Soviets will destroy the remaining shorter-range INF missiles within a year of ratification of the treaty.

Officials said that the Soviets did not propose to eliminate battlefield nuclear weapons—those with a range of less than 300 miles—as part of the INF treaty. Instead, they propose to deal with this issue in later negotiations.

The report of Shultz and his aides at the end of 20 hours of talks with Soviet leaders over three days indicated that major strides toward agreement had been made only in the field of an INF treaty.

Such an accord would cover neither the huge arsenal of intercontinental-range, or strategic, missiles that are the main threat to both superpowers, nor Reagan's plan for antimissile defense, widely known as Star Wars. Some modest strides reportedly were recorded in these and other areas, however.

■ In strategic arms, both sides are reported to have “put aside” the highly ambitious proposals at Reykjavik for elimination of nuclear weapons and to be concentrating now on 50 percent cuts.

■ Shultz said he had brought some new proposals in the space area—as earlier reported in Washington—but that “we didn’t get into them in any particular detail.”

■ U.S. and Soviet aides have been assigned to follow up on some “interesting discussion” with Shevardnadze about ways of verifying the size of nuclear weapons tests, Shultz said.

■ On chemical weapons, Shultz said U.S. and Soviet experts would exchange visits to chemical-weapons destruction facilities in each other's countries. The Soviets acknowledged only a few days ago that they have such plants. But the two coun-

tries are reported to be far apart on verification in this area.

■ Work on creation of U.S. and Soviet nuclear-risk reduction centers is so advanced that Shultz forecast an agreement would be reached when the talks on this issue resume in May.

No break was in sight in the exchange of charges over bugging and other espionage at the U.S. Embassy here and Soviet diplomatic missions in the United States. Shultz said he had expressed his “strong feelings” on this subject but Soviet leaders continued to reject his protest and the Soviet press continued to attack what it called “spy mania” in the United States.

Despite concerns that Shultz would be unable to communicate with Washington without the risk of being monitored by the Soviets, State Department sources said a stream of top-secret cables from Shultz was dispatched securely and that Shultz spoke by telephone with Reagan and national security adviser Frank Carlucci in California Tuesday night over a secure telephone from a U.S. communications van brought here for that purpose.

Shultz took a higher profile than has been customary on human rights issues, attending a Passover service for Soviet human rights activists at the U.S. ambassador's residence Monday night.

While the Soviets took a dim view of Shultz's activities, at the end of today's meeting, Shevardnadze gave him a list of 25 emigration cases he said had been resolved.

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